

Net Gain

Final Recommendations Submission to Natural England & JNCC

**Section 7.31 (Site Assessment Document)
rRA 13, Rock Unique rRA**

31 August 2011

Version 1.1

7.31 Marine Conservation Zone: rRA 13, Rock Unique rRA

Version and issue date	Amendments made
V1.0 August, 2011	

Site name

rRA 13, Rock Unique rRA (falls within NG 15, Rock Unique)

Site centre location

55° 42' 52''N, 0° 39' 03''W °

55.714833°, -0.650931°

Lambert Azimuthal Equal Area projection

Site surface area

52.49km² / 5,248.60ha

Lambert Azimuthal Equal Area projection

Biogeographic region

JNCC Regional Sea: Northern North Sea

OSPAR Region II: Greater North Sea

Table 7.237 Features proposed for designation within rRA 13, Rock Unique rRA

Feature type	Feature name	Area covered within site (for broad-scale habitats and habitats of conservation importance)
Broad-scale habitat	A4.3: Low energy circalittoral rock	13.88km ²
Broad-scale habitat	A5.1: Subtidal coarse sediment	1.99km ²
Broad-scale habitat	A5.2: Subtidal sand	36.63km ²
Habitat of conservation importance	Subtidal sands and gravels (modelled)	48.07km ²
Species of conservation importance	n/a	n/a
Geological feature	n/a	n/a
Other feature	n/a	n/a

Features within rRA 13, Rock Unique rRA not proposed for designation

All features that are present in rRA 13 are recommended for designation.

Map of site

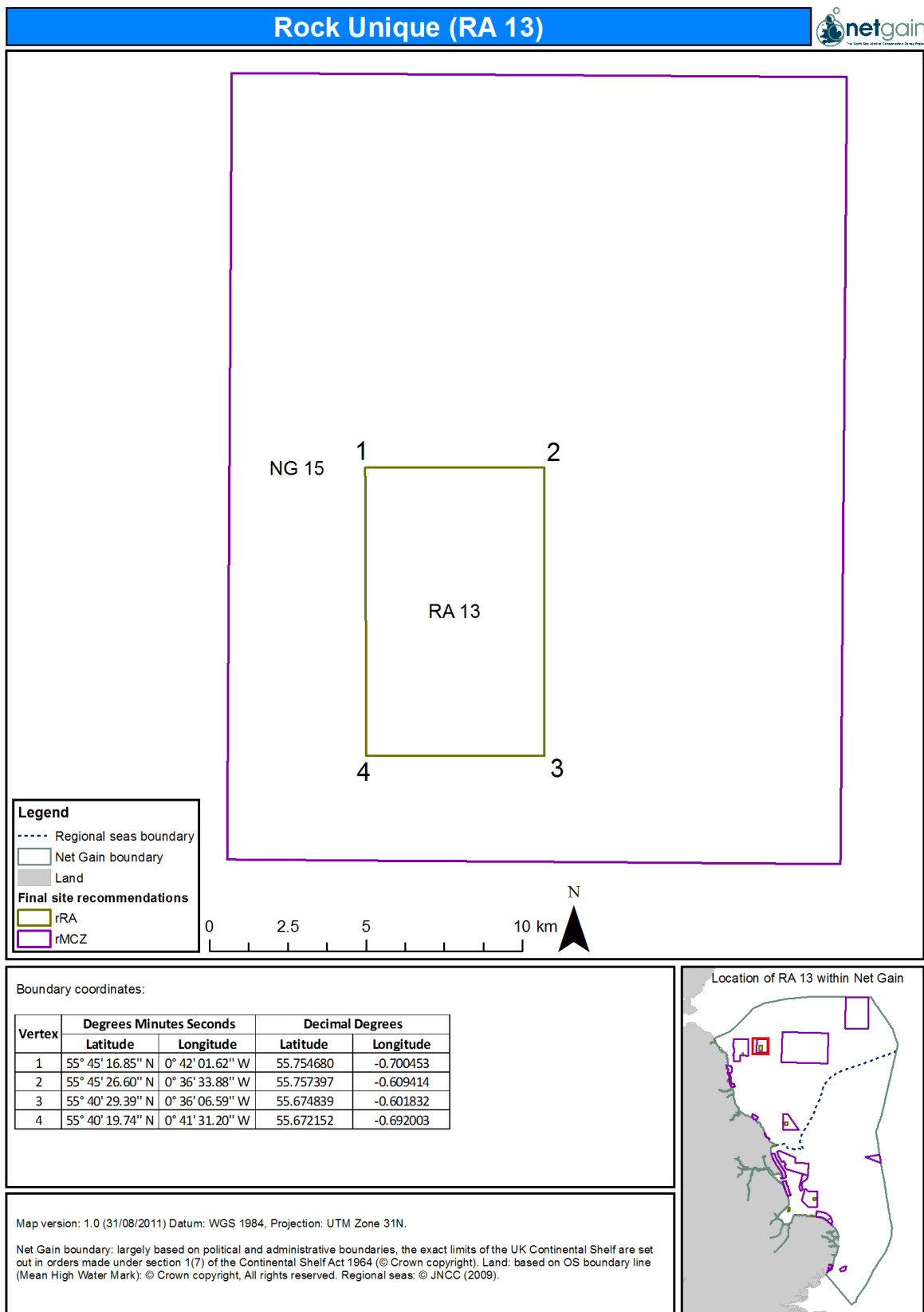


Figure 7.212 Location and extent of site rRA 13 (Rock Unique rRA)

Site summary

rRA 13 lies within NG 15 approximately 60km offshore from the Berwickshire region of the North Northumberland Coast in the North East of England. The depth of the site is 50m deep (Figure 7.214) and the seabed is composed of low energy circalittoral rock, subtidal coarse sediment, subtidal sand and subtidal sands and gravels. The site was developed to protect the low energy circalittoral rock as it is the only example of this feature present within the Net Gain region. The rock provides habitat for unique animal communities that include sea squirts, dead man's fingers, anemones and peacock worms (Conner, 2004).

Detailed site description

Recommended RA13 is located within rMCZ NG 15, and is predominantly subtidal sand with areas of subtidal coarse sediment and low energy circalittoral rock, with subtidal sands and gravels identified as habitats of conservation importance. The site contains the only example of low energy circalittoral rock in the Net Gain project area. This habitat is extremely rare around the UK, with a few examples being found in the Scottish lochs and a few isolated sites around the south-west of England and the west coast of Ireland (Connor, 2004).

Due to the low energy associated with this rocky habitat and the depth at which it occurs a unique animal community is able to persist. With areas too deep for algae to obtain the light they need to grow, animal communities of sea squirts (*Ciona intestinalis*, *Ascidia mentula*), dead man's fingers and plumose anemones are able to proliferate as well as peacock worms, bristleworms, squat lobsters, hermit crabs and a number of species of urchin (Connor, 2004).

Subtidal sands and gravels HOCl are identified as a priority habitat in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP) (Maddock, 2008). With coarse sediment habitats being characterised by polychaete worms, mobile crustacea, for example squat lobster, bivalve molluscs and a number of species of sea cucumber (Connor, 2004).

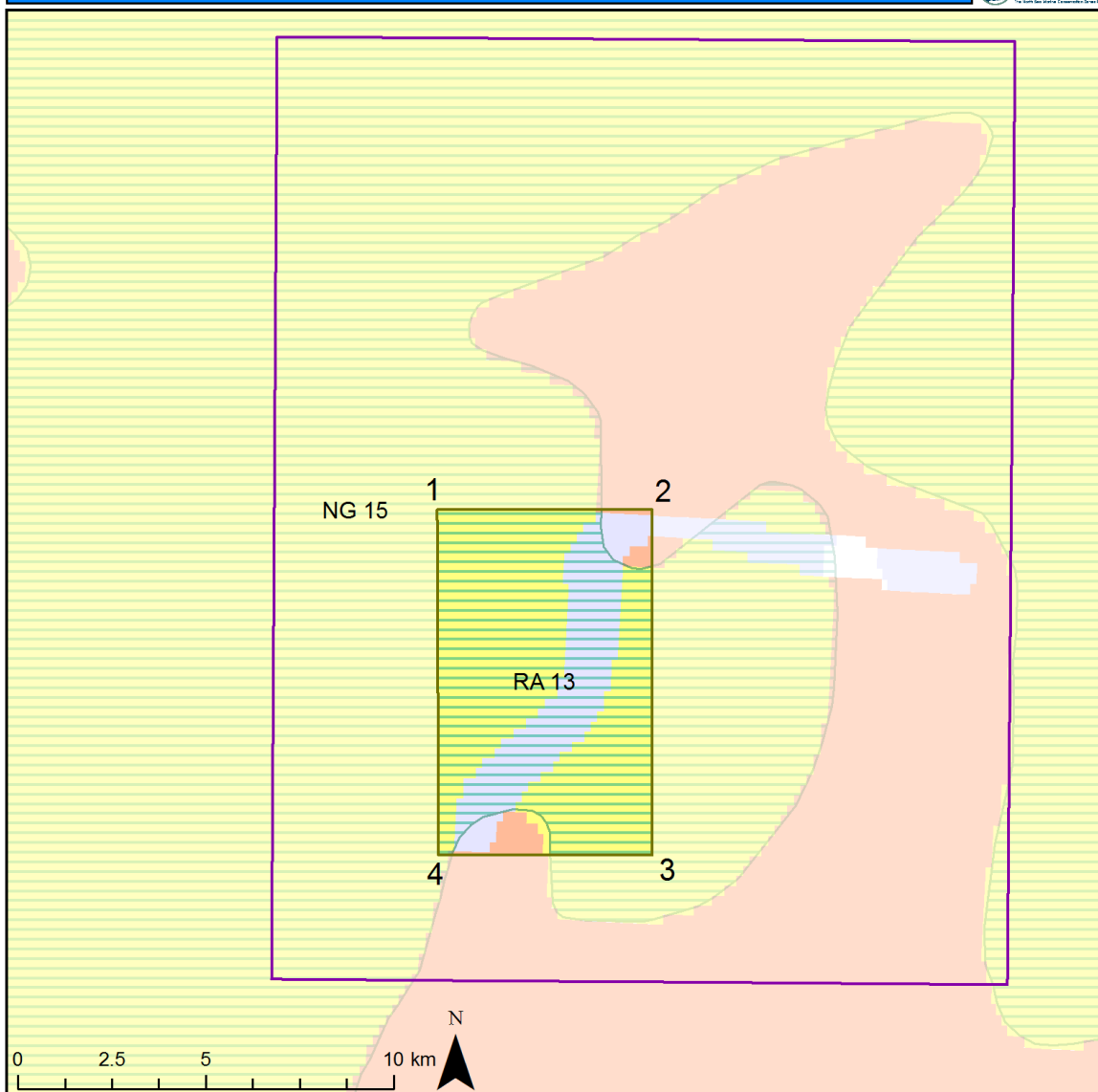
Sandy seabeds further offshore are not usually disturbed by waves and tides in the same way that inshore areas are and so are able to support polychaete worms, bivalve molluscs and amphipod crustacea within them (Connor, 2004).

Cetacean sightings for this area include year round sightings of white-beaked dolphin *Lagenorhynchus albirostris*, along with harbour porpoise *Phocoena phocoen*, minke whale *Balaenoptera acutorostrata* and humpback whale *Megaptera novaeanglia* (Bereton, 2010; Evans, 2003). All of which are Marine Biodiversity Action Plan (MBAP) species in the UK. Harbour porpoise is listed in Annex II of the EU Habitats Directive as species whose conservation requires the designation of Special Areas of Conservation. Sightings in the area coupled with known foraging distances of grey seal suggest that this site could be used by the grey seal population present on the Farne Islands (Thompson, 2010) The grey seal is afforded conservation protection under the EC Habitats Directive, Annex II and Annex V and is named in the Northumberland Biodiversity Action Plan (Cranson, 2008).

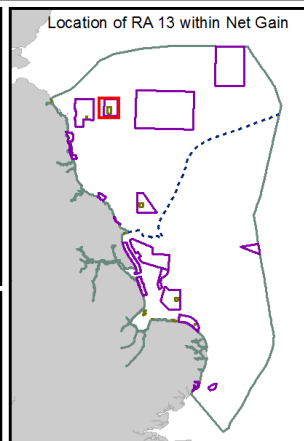
There are areas of NG15 which are fished for pelagic species (The Wildlife Trusts, 2010).

NG 15 has been shown to be important for seabirds including guillemot *Uria aalge*, kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla* and puffin *Fratercula arctica* (Kober, 2010). Foraging ranges of these birds suggest that these could be birds from the Farne Islands using this area for feeding.

Rock Unique (RA 13)



Legend	
-----	Regional seas boundary
□	Net Gain boundary
■	Land
□	rRA
□	rMCZ
Habitats of conservation importance	
□	Subtidal sands and gravels (modelled)
Broad scale habitat	
□	A4.3: Low energy circalittoral rock
□	A5.1: Subtidal coarse sediment
□	A5.2: Subtidal sand

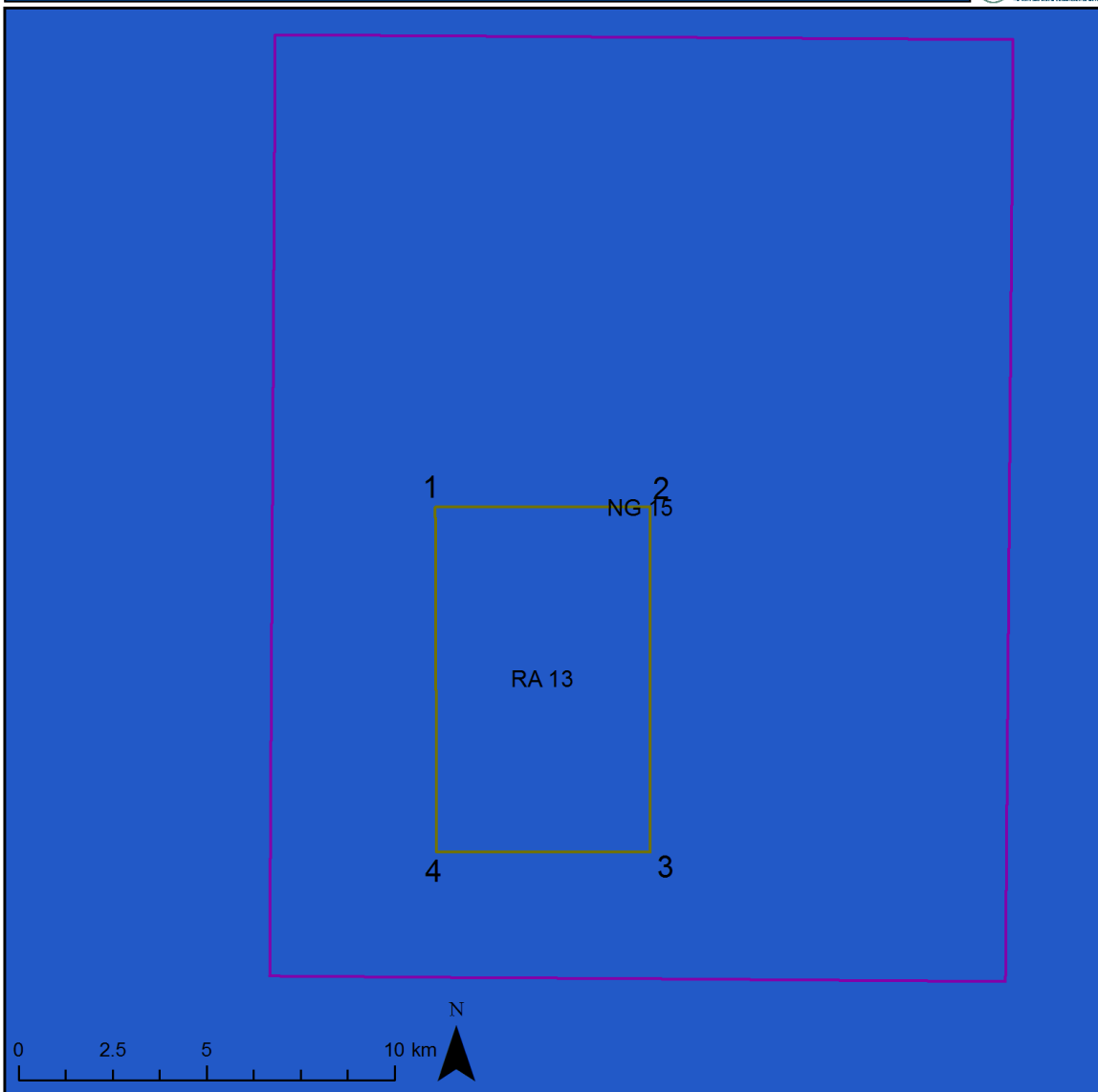


Map version: 1.0 (31/08/2011) Datum: WGS 1984, Projection: UTM Zone 31N.

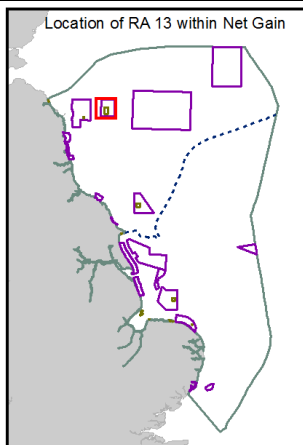
Broad scale habitats (UKSeaMap2010): JNCC, 2010. Habitats FOCI: Defra contract / ABPmer. Net Gain boundary: largely based on political and administrative boundaries, the exact limits of the UK Continental Shelf are set out in orders made under section 1(7) of the Continental Shelf Act 1964 (© Crown copyright). Land: based on OS boundary line (Mean High Water Mark): © Crown copyright, All rights reserved. Regional seas: © JNCC (2009). All rights reserved.

Figure 7.213 Features recommended for designation in rRA 13

Rock Unique (RA 13)



Legend	
-----	Regional seas boundary
□	Net Gain boundary
■	Land
□	rRA
□	rMCZ
Depth class based on LMW Mark (m)	
■	<= -5
■	<= 0
■	<= 5
■	<= 10
■	<= 15
■	<= 20
■	<= 30
■	<= 40
■	<= 50
■	<= 75
■	<= 100
■	<= 150
■	<= 200



Map version: 1.0 (31/08/2011) Datum: WGS 1984, Projection: UTM Zone 31N. Contains data from the Ordnance Survey © Crown Copyright and database right 2011. Ordnance Survey 100022021. Contains data from the UK Hydrographic Office © Crown Copyright and/or database rights. Reproduced by permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office and the UK Hydrographic Office (www.ukho.gov.uk). Admiralty Charts © Crown Copyright, 2011. All rights reserved. License No. EK001-GOV001. NOT TO BE USED FOR NAVIGATION. Contains UKHO Law of the Sea data © Crown copyright and database right. Net Gain boundary: largely based on political and administrative boundaries, the exact limits of the UK Continental Shelf are set out in orders made under section 1(7) of the Continental Shelf Act 1964 (© Crown copyright). Land: based on OS boundary line (Mean High Water Mark); © Crown copyright, All rights reserved. Regional seas: © JNCC (2009). National limits: UKHO. Contains UKHO Law of the Sea data © Crown copyright and database right.

Figure 7.214 Bathymetry of rRA 13

Site boundary

The boundary of rRA 13 was proposed to cover three broad-scale habitats: low energy circalittoral rock, subtidal sand and subtidal coarse sediment. Review of commercial fishing data indicated that there wouldn't be a significant impact on the commercial fishing sector. It was suggested that the reference area should be aligned N-S as this configuration would avoid an area of high pelagic fishing activity.

Conservation objectives

Table 7.238 Conservation objectives for site rRA 13, A4.3: Low energy circalittoral rock

Section	
1 Conservation Objective	Low energy circalittoral rock is extremely rare around the UK apart from the Scottish lochs. There are a few isolated sites around the south-west of England and the west coast of Ireland. Subject to natural change, recover the low energy circalittoral rock to favourable condition by 2020 and maintain thereafter, and recover the low energy circalittoral rock in the area marked on map Figure 7.213 to reference condition, such that:
2 Attributes and parameters(indicated by *)	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Habitat</u></p> <p>the</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • extent, • diversity, • community structure, • natural environmental quality*, and • natural environmental processes* <p>representative of the low energy circalittoral rock in the biogeographic region is recovered and the low energy circalittoral rock area marked on map Figure 7.213 is recovered to reference condition, such that the feature makes its contribution to the network.</p>
Advice on operations	
3 Human activities	Reference areas should be managed to remove or prevent all extraction, deposition or human-derived disturbance and damage.

Table 7.239 Conservation objectives for site rRA 13, A5.1: Subtidal coarse sediment

Section	
1 Conservation Objective	Subtidal coarse sediment is widespread around the British Isles and mainland Europe. Subject to natural change, recover the subtidal coarse sediment to favourable condition by 2020 and maintain thereafter, and recover the subtidal coarse sediment in the area marked on map Figure 7.213 to reference condition, such that:
2 Attributes and parameters(indicated by *)	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Habitat</u></p> <p>the</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • extent, • diversity, • community structure, • natural environmental quality*, and • natural environmental processes* <p>representative of the subtidal coarse sediment in the biogeographic region is recovered and the subtidal coarse sediment area marked on map Figure 7.213 is recovered to reference condition, such that the feature makes its contribution to the network.</p>
Advice on operations	
3 Human activities	Reference areas should be managed to remove or prevent all extraction, deposition or human-derived disturbance and damage.

Table 7.240 Conservation objectives for site rRA 13, A5.2: Subtidal sand

Section	
1 Conservation Objective	Subtidal sand is widespread around the British Isles and mainland Europe. Subject to natural change, recover the subtidal sand to favourable condition by 2020 and maintain thereafter, and recover the subtidal sand in the area marked on map Figure 7.213 to reference condition, such that:
2 Attributes and parameters(indicated by *)	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Habitat</u></p> <p>the</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • extent, • diversity, • community structure, • natural environmental quality*, and • natural environmental processes* <p>representative of the subtidal sand in the biogeographic region is recovered and the subtidal sand area marked on map Figure 7.213 is recovered to reference condition, such that the feature makes its contribution to the network.</p>
Advice on operations	
3 Human activities	Reference areas should be managed to remove or prevent all extraction, deposition or human-derived disturbance and damage.

Table 7.241 Conservation objectives for site rRA 13, Subtidal sands and gravels

Section	
1 Conservation Objective	Subtidal sands and gravels are on the UK List of Priority Species and Habitats (UK BAP). Subject to natural change, recover the subtidal sands and gravels to favourable condition by 2020 and maintain thereafter, and recover the subtidal sands and gravels in the area marked on map Figure 7.213 to reference condition, such that:
2 Attributes and parameters(indicated by *)	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Habitat</u></p> <p>the</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • extent, • diversity, • community structure, • natural environmental quality*, and • natural environmental processes* <p>representative of the subtidal sands and gravels in the biogeographic region is recovered and the subtidal sands and gravels area marked on map Figure 7.213 is recovered to reference condition, such that the feature makes its contribution to the network.</p>
Advice on operations	
3 Human activities	Reference areas should be managed to remove or prevent all extraction, deposition or human-derived disturbance and damage.

Sites to which this site is related

This section considers neighbouring rMCZs and other MPAs that overlap with, or are adjacent to (i.e. within c.5km) of the rMCZ under discussion. Other sites that are linked with this rMCZ but which are outside of the scope of this section as defined are considered under 'Connectivity' within ENG requirement section.

rRA 13 falls within NG 15 and is not protected by any MPAs.

Levels of stakeholder support

At the second Large Group Meeting (July 2011) stakeholders (who were assigned to groups to discuss the sites from their own Regional Hubs) were asked to provide **feedback on the consensus support** for the site (scoring 1 for 'strongly against' through to 4 for 'strongly support'), an indication of the likely level of contention that designation of the site might have (scored as 'L', 'M' or 'H'), and a view on the group's confidence in the underlying data used to develop site proposals (again scored as 'L', 'M' or 'H').

One group indicated that they could not support the site (scoring it '1', strongly against). This was primarily from the point of view of the commercial fishing sector; however it was recognised that the site had been identified as it was the only area of the low energy circalittoral rock broad-scale habitat feature in the Net Gain Project area. The other group were neutral in their view (scoring the site '2½'). They suggested that the level of support was not great but understood the importance of the area and its importance regarding meeting requirements of ENG.

Confidence in the underlying data was high, the principal element of the site being a distinct and easily identified feature.

Whilst one group believed the potential contention around the site would be high, due to objections by commercial fishing, the other group suggested that it would be low.

Formal sector-specific feedback on the network of MCZs presented in the Draft Final Recommendations report was provided by a number of stakeholders. A précis of their comments is provided below. Full copies of all formal feedback received for the Draft Final Recommendations, as well as for each of the three preceding iterations, are presented as an Annex to this report.

- NFFO - commercial fishing:- Strongly against (both on principle, and because of its size)

In previous Regional Hub discussions this site had achieved consensus. Site planning had been mindful of fishing activity, both in orienting the site in a N-S direction to avoid pelagic fishing activity and also in reducing the size of the original site suggested in the 3rd iteration to accommodate concerns from the commercial fishing sector.

Table 7.242 Supporting documentation

Information	Type of information	Source
Broad-scale habitat	Modelled data	Mc Breen, 2010
Pelagic ecological importance	Amalgamated pelagic data layer	The Wildlife Trusts, 2010
Subtidal sands and gravels	Modelled data	Tyler-Walters, et al. 2009

References

CONNOR, D. ALLEN, J. GOLDING, N. HOWELL, K. LIEBERKNECHT, NORTHEN, K. REKER, J 2004. *The Marine Habitat Classification for Britain and Ireland Version 04.05* JNCC, Peterborough ISBN 1 861 07561 8 (internet version)

CRANSON, A. WALTON, J. 2008. *Grey Seal (Halichoerus grypus) Species Action Plan*. Northumberland Biodiversity Action Plan.

MADDOCK, A. 2008. *UK Biodiversity Action Plan; Priority Habitat Descriptions*. Accessed from <http://www.ukbap.org.uk/library/UKBAPPriorityHabitatDescriptionsfinalAllhabitats20081022.pdf>

McBREEN, F. 2010. *UKSeaMap 2010 EUNIS model Version 3.0. UKSeaMap 2010: Predictive seabed habitat map (v5)*. JNCC.

THE WILDLIFE TRUSTS. 2010. *Areas of additional pelagic ecological importance (APEI) data layer*.

THOMPSON, D. and DUCK, C. 2010 *Berwickshire and North Northumberland Coast European Marine Site: grey seal population status*. Report to Natural England

TYLER-WALTERS, H., MILLER, P., McQUATTERS-GOLLOP, A., SAUNDERS, J., FOX, C. 2009. *Accessing and developing the required biophysical datasets and data layers for Marine Protected Areas network planning and wider marine spatial planning purposes. Task 2F - Development of a marine diversity data layer: review of approaches and proposed method*. ABP Marine Environmental Research Ltd.